



August 12, 2004

Michael K. Powell  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

MB Docket No. 04-207

Dear Chairman Powell:

My name is Melanie Campbell and I am President of the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation in Washington, DC.

I have read the comments filed by those who advocate for more choice in the cable system with great interest. I can understand how some start-up networks would be frustrated with how hard it can be to find distribution under the current model, particularly when the programming they offer would clearly be beneficial to certain under-represented segments of the community.

That said, I strongly believe that switching the current system in favor of an a la carte alternative would be tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Over the last twenty years or so, cable television has started to look a lot more like the country it ought to reflect and represent. Where once we only rarely encountered minorities on television—and then often only in caricatured or negative roles—there is now a vast array of networks that correspond to the growing diversity of America and present much-needed positive images to minority communities.

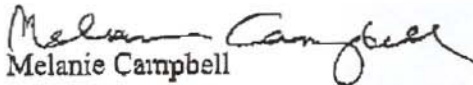
To adopt an a la carte model would be to ring a death knell for the vast majority of these networks—there is simply no way around it. A recent Booz Allen economic analysis of an a la carte system found that as many as half to two-thirds of the smaller, more niche-oriented channels would fail.

The current system of bundling channels together provides allows channels that showcase diversity their principal means of getting established in front of viewers. It would be a huge mistake to change the rules now.

While more voices are certainly needed in the dialogue, a shift to an a la carte model is not the answer. Instead of deepening the debate and broadening the perspectives currently

represented, we would cement today's imperfect levels of diversity as the high water mark for years to come. That is not a prospect that I want to face, and I believe firmly that it would be the wrong choice for those who care about diversity in America.

Sincerely,

  
Melanie Campbell  
President & CEO